DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 460 UD 029 472

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TITLE	The Schoolhouse Door: Segregation's Last Stand at the University of Alabama.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-19-507417-3
PUB DATE	93
NOTE	327p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Oxford University Press, Inc., Business Office, 2001 Evans Road, Cary, NC 27513 ($25).
PUB TYPE	Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Black Students; *Civil Disobedience; Civil Rights; College Admission; *College Desegregation; *Educational Discrimination; Educational History; *Equal Education; Federal State Relationship; Higher Education; Local History; *Racial Discrimination; Racial Relations; State History; State Universities; Whites
IDENTIFIERS	African Americans; Alabama; Social Movements; *University of Alabama; Wallace (George)

ABSTRACT

This book explores George Wallace's June, 1963 defiance of desegregation at the University of Alabama campus. After a tense confrontation, President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard and Wallace backed down, allowing Vivian Malone and James Hood to become the first African Americans to enroll successfully at their state's flagship university. This book also recounts the history of the civil rights movements from the 1940s leading to that moment in 1963. It is based on interviews with Autherine Lucy (who in 1956 was expelled from the university after having previously won, with the help of Thurgood Marshall and lawyers of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the right to enroll) and others on both sides of the conflict who were directly involved with the events of that year and the years leading up to it. The book analyzes Wallace's role in events in Alabama, arguing that he was a racist demagogue who believed what he said, and who believed completely that only if he stood good on his pledge to resist and renounce force-induced desegregation would the peace be preserved. The author also examines the parts played by John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and suggests that they took action for civil rights more quickly than any other politicians in American could or would have and that the cost of that action was that the Democratic party lost its presidential base. The narrative also takes a close look at the administration of the University of Alabama itself in the years before 1963. A bibliography of primary sources, interviews, magazine and newspaper articles, newspapers, pamphlets, memoirs, speeches and miscellaneous writings, secondary sources, extensive notes on each chapter, and an index are included. (JB)